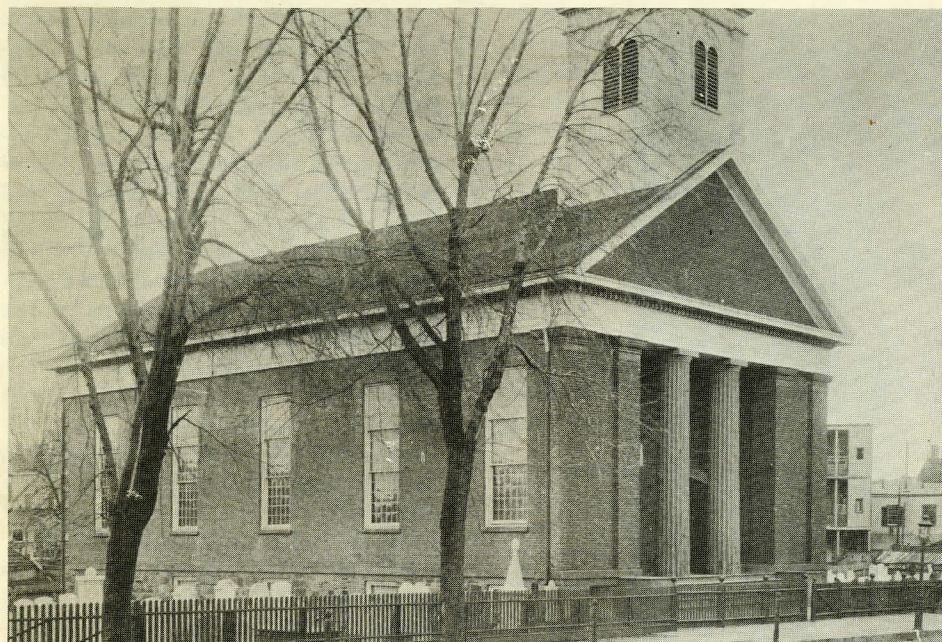




REFORMED CHURCH, PORT RICHMOND - c. 1885

four thousand seven hundred dollars, besides a voucher for fifty thousand dollars more, which only lacked the authentication of the Secretary of War; and which, on being afterwards presented, was duly so authenticated.

On the assembling of Congress, the verdict, with all the accompanying documents and accounts from the District Court, was laid before them, and a Committee was appointed to examine them and report without delay. They reported progress only, having but in part finished their investigations; but, on the ground of what they had already examined, they awarded to the Governor ninety-two thousand dollars, which was immediately paid him. Before another and final report was made, which was unreasonably delayed through the tardiness of the Committee, Governor Tompkins died, and the whole matter rested till 1842, when the youngest member of his family claimed and

received the balance of the one hundred and thirty-four thousand seven hundred dollars awarded by the jury, with interest. The claim for the additional fifty thousand dollars is still unsettled, and the amount yet due to the representatives of Gov. Tompkins, who, in justice to the memory of a noble man, ought to press the matter to a final settlement, and effectually clear away all aspersions of this nature from his memory. This they will no doubt do, at the proper time, and with complete success.

Time has cleared away the reproaches which were cast by partisan rancor upon a true Patriot, and courageous and efficient Officer and Public Servant. His fellow-citizens cherish an admiring and grateful remembrance of his services and his name, and feel pride in the thought that he belonged, in a certain sense, to Staten Island, and to themselves.

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Tel. 351-1611
351-1617

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History makes us some amends for
the shortness of life.

- JOHN SKELTON - 1460? - 1529

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WILLIAM C.A. FRERICHS, ARTIST, 1829-1905

by Hildegard J. Safford

The current revival of interest in 19th century American painters and painting, especially evident in the recent exhibition of 110 paintings in three art galleries in Manhattan entitled "The American Vision, 1825-1875", has been brought to the attention of Staten Island by an exhibition of paintings by Jasper Cropsey at the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences and by a number of articles in the Staten Island Advance by Barry Delaney on artists identified with Staten Island, notably Cropsey, William Page and John W. Ehninger.

An artist of the 19th century not included in Dorothy Smith's comprehensive article on local artists in the July, 1939 issue of the "Staten Island Historian" was William C.A.

Frerichs, 1829-1905, who lived in Tottenville for fifteen years and some of whose descendants are still living on Staten Island. Frerichs painted landscapes in the tradition of the Romanticists of the period and was inspired like them by an America which still had a natural wilderness and beauty of landscape. He also painted seascapes, animals, portraits and still lifes. He was a teacher of note. Although he was never a member of the American Academy of Design, a number of his paintings are hanging in museums throughout this country. He was a good, versatile artist who made a living by his art and was much admired in his day not only for his abilities in his profession but also for the affable and courteous manners of a gentleman.

The attention of this writer was brought to this artist when she was associated with the Tottenville Branch of the New York Public Library and received an inquiry from a woman in St. Mary's, Ontario, Canada requesting information on two paintings signed by Frerichs and entitled on name plates "Lake Magog" and "Old Quebec" which she had owned for many years.

Visits to two relatives on Staten Island and two people in New Jersey who own a number of paintings by Frerichs made it seem worthwhile to try to find more of his paintings. Subsequent research has turned up information on an interesting life and a list of 119 paintings of which 57 have been located and of these 40 personally photographed.



MOUNT WASHINGTON - CONWAY VALLEY, NEW HAMPSHIRE - By W. Frerichs, 1865

William Karel Anthonius Frerichs, son of Willem Daniel Frerichs and Helen Eugenia Crommelinck, was born on March 2, 1829, in Ghent which at that time was a part of the Netherlands. His father was an army officer and afterwards editor of a French newspaper in The Hague. His mother was of distinguished French ancestry. William attended the Royal Academy at The Hague from his sixth to his fourteenth year, studying art under the Dutch masters Bartholomew Van Hoven and Schelf Hout. The next three years he spent at the University of Leyden pursuing a regular scholastic course and preparing for the medical profession. However, he abandoned this study and returned to the school at the Hague from which he graduated with honors at the age of eighteen. At this time he sold his first large canvas, a 12x17 feet "Cattle Scene" which was purchased for the Emperor of Russia by a commission sent to The Hague. The next few years he studied art at the Royal Academy of Brussels. After graduating he spent some time travelling about in Europe, particularly Paris, Rome and Vienna, winning prizes in several exhibitions in the meanwhile.

While at The Hague he had become acquainted with the American Charge d'Affaires, Major August Davasae, who advised him to start his career in America and gave him letters of introduction to prominent people in New York City. So with a passport dated July 4, 1850, William Frerichs sailed for the New World. His passport described him as age 21; hair blond; eyes blue; nose regular, mouth regular; face long and in height "7 palmes 5 pouces" (about 6 feet). No mention was made of his height "7 palmes 5 pouces" (about feet). No mention was made of his ears which were said to be exceptionally large, but perhaps they were hidden by the long hair which he as an artist effected.

There are few references to Frerich's activities the next few years. In 1852 he exhibited a portrait of the Cuban filibuster, General Narciso Lopez, in the National Academy of Design. His address was listed as 303 24th Street. In later years he made a statement to a newspaper reporter that, arrived in New York, he immediately joined a leading club of artists and literary men. This club may have been the New York Sketch Club to which he was unanimously elected a member in 1852.

On January 1, 1854 Frerichs married Mrs. Clara Butler of New



WILLIAM C.A. FRERICHS AT WORK IN HIS STUDIO.

York City. Born Clara Branwaite she is said, as a child in England, to have played on the beach with Queen Victoria. Her father Peregrine Branwaite came from England in 1842. A beautiful woman, as evidenced by a family portrait, she also was a woman of culture and attainment.

Later in the year 1854 Frerichs accepted a teaching post as Professor of Arts and Languages at the Greensboro Female College in Greensboro, North Carolina. This college was chartered by the North Carolina Methodist Conference in 1838 and still exists today as "Greensboro College". The President of the college at this time was the Reverend Charles F. Deems. The Frerichs' were to continue association later in New York with this man who was to become organizer and pastor of the Church of the Stranger, the first non-denominational church in America; the President of the American Institute of Christian Philosophy; and a figure in the Temperance movement on Staten Island.

Greensboro is situated in the Piedmont Plateau with the mountains of the great Appalachian Range to

the west and the north - The Blue Ridge, Great Smokies, Alleghenies, Shenadoahs, etc. There were wonderful opportunities for landscape painting and that he roamed the wilderness about him is attested to in the titles of the pictures he painted in those days. These he was to paint many more times when back in the East with variations from sketches or from recollection. We are told that his works did not have a ready market in the South and were sold mostly in New York. However, a landscape view of "Piedmont Springs, N.C." was bought by the ex-governor of North Carolina, John M. Morehead. And two landscapes in the North Carolina Museum of Art at Raleigh - "A Stormy Day on the Blue Ridge Mountains, Virginia" and "The Falls of the French Broad River, N.C." were bought at an auction in Augusta, Georgia in 1871 by General W.B. Heard of Washington, Georgia. These paintings graced the walls of his mansion when the last Cabinet meeting of the Confederacy was held here with Jefferson Davis presiding.

According to statements made later by him, Frerichs painted many prominent people of the South, nota-

bly Generals Joseph E. Johnston, Robert E. Lee and G.T. Beauregard. Then there is that puzzling photograph of a painting which was given to the Staten Island Historical Society by a descendant. The donor called it a burial of an unknown soldier of the Union Army and said it was done by Frerichs for the Harper family of Harper's Ferry. She claimed that it depicts a burial on General Breckinridge's plantation in Louisiana, with the services being read by Mrs. Breckinridge. Several other people, among them Mrs. Jefferson Davis and her daughter Willie and a number of slaves are grouped nearby. However, other sources indicate that this is not the burial of an unknown Union soldier, but rather a Confederate burial service and which was probably a copy of a painting done by the portrait and historical painter William De Hartburn Washington (1834-1870) and entitled "The Burial of Latane". Captain William Latane was killed June 13, 1862 at Linney's Corner in Virginia during Stuart's famous ride around McClellan's Army. He was buried at a nearby plantation with the aid of family servants and one of the ladies was conducting the service because a minister was not available. A large steel engraving of this picture hangs in the home of the Collins family in Hillsboro, North Carolina. The Old Print Shop of Manhattan sold a large print in 1955. Both are inscribed with the name W.D. Washington. There is an account of this event in the Federal Writers' Project of the WPA. In the book, "The Writers' Program for the State of Virginia," Washington is also named the painter. A poem celebrating this event by John R. Thompson may be found in a number of anthologies of poems of American history.

In 1863 Greensboro College was destroyed by fire. Frerichs' collection of paintings and art objects was completely destroyed. He was invited to Edgewood Seminary, the Presbyterian College, in the same town but after four months the government took over the buildings for hospital purposes. Then he became Professor of Drawing and Painting at the Quaker College in New Garden, North Carolina. While serving here he was appointed to special duty with a corps of engineers to inspect the iron mines and works in the mountains for the Confederacy, meeting with many adventures and being taken prisoner three times.

He determined to move with his family to the eastern part of the state

for the purpose of going into farming. Armed with a pass from the Provost Marshall to Williston, North Carolina and dated February 8, 1865, they travelled in their own conveyance about 400 miles, making long detours to avoid Federal and Confederate armies and finally reached their destination on the Scuppernon River. They found the situation here so disheartening that they decided to abandon their property. Frerichs started to New York ahead of the family and taking a small sloop on Pamlico Sound, navigated only by himself and the captain, they started for Norfolk, Virginia. During the whole voyage of three days and nights there was no sleep for as one man steered the other had to bail out. He finally arrived in New York, his horse having been stolen from him on the way, almost penniless and a comparative stranger in the "new and pushing generation" that had come up. When his family rejoined him they were all sick with fever. And now Professor Frerichs had to start his life anew.

Frerichs kept a studio at 627 Broadway for about four years during which time his home was first at 324 South 6th Street in Jersey City and then in Morrisania. It was while living in Jersey City that Clara Frerichs became a source of encouragement to their old friend, Dr. Robert F. Deems, the Methodist minister who had been president of Greensboro College at the time her husband was teaching there. After the burning of the College, Dr. Deems had come to New York City where he had hoped to be received into the Northern Methodist Episcopal Conference. But the religious situation was very depressing. He was denied admittance to the Methodist church because of ill feeling between the North and the South. He had been refused admittance to several Church services until all the pewholders had been seated, and then from the pulpit he heard nothing but denunciations of the southern rebels. He wished he could form a "Free" church to which anyone of any denomination could go, but the effort of supporting his family and paying his debts stood in his way. Mrs. Frerichs attended a sermon Dr. Deems had been invited to preach before the Y.M.C.A. of the Hedding Methodist Episcopal Church in Jersey City. After the sermon she accompanied him to the ferry boat and importuned him to begin preaching regularly in New York City, saying "I am sure that God intends you to

preach in New York. I do beg of you to promise you will preach just four weeks in New York, even if it is in a garret or a cellar or a tent". Dr. Deems hired a small chapel at Washington Square for one month. His first audience of 15 people included Mrs. Frerich and her daughter. From this small beginning and with the help of Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt there evolved the powerful "Church of the Strangers", the first non-denominational church in the United States. Dr. Deems was also one of the pioneers of the Prohibition Movement and was later to be actively identified with the Summer School of Prohibition Park on Staten Island. Deems Memorial Chapel, now a part of Immanuel Union Church, was dedicated to him. His wife was niece of Gabriel Disosway, writer, historian and member of an old Staten Island family. Dr. Deems and his family are buried in the Moravian Cemetery in New Dorp in a plot which was the gift of Cornelius Vanderbilt.

In 1869 Frerichs came to live in Tottenville, then a thriving village. It is said he first visited in a sloop, attracted by the town's reputation as a summer resort. There were other inducements for coming to Staten Island. Two fine artists were living nearby, both members of the National Academy of Design - Jasper F. Cropsey in Rossville and William Page in his octagonal house on Page Avenue in Tottenville. The artist Christopher P. Cranch was on Staten Island the first part of the 1870s and was a friend of both Cropsey and Page. Dr. Deems had Staten Island contacts through his wife, niece of Gabriel Disosway, and through Cornelius Vanderbilt. Another contact may have been George A. Leavitt who had been living on the North Shore on Pendleton Avenue since 1851 and through whose Leavitt Art Salesrooms on Astor Place in Manhattan the artists of the day disposed of many of their paintings.

Frerichs lived for eleven years in Tottenville on the corner of what is now Craig and Johnson Avenues in a house no longer standing. He had three children - William D. Frerichs - later to become well known in the field of Terra Cotta - Lena and Charles.

We have little knowledge of what Frerichs painted during these years. There is reference to a Staten Island scene called "Coming home from School" or, "Boys and Girls Sleighing and Snowballing". Exhibited in a store window in Newark, New

Jersey, it was well described by a Newark journalist with the added comment; "Drawn from life, the scene is laid in Staten Island where one would least expect to find the subject matter for a composition of this kind." Also known are two scenes at Princes Bay, Staten Island painted for Mr. Houseman of Danbury, Connecticut — one with Mr. Houseman's prize bull, "Duke of Danbury" in the foreground, and the other from the same spot in winter with a portrait of Mr. Houseman. Two scriptural paintings in the Chancel of St. Stephen's Church, Tottenville, were by Frerichs upon which the Reverend Mr. Nichols of this church based one of his sermons. "Sailboat on Raritan Bay" showing a bit of Mt. Loretto in the foreground and Morgan Way, New Jersey in the background, is now owned by Mrs. John Lewis of Perth Amboy, New Jersey. "Ice Skating, Winter Scene on Staten Island", 1879, is owned by the Salem Art Association, Salem, Oregon. A similar winter scene was offered for sale in 1964 for \$850 by the Old Print Shop in Manhattan. "Parler au Port" which according to the catalog of the Leavitt, Strebeigh & Company Art Catalog, March 18-19, 1870 was to be sold with the estate of a Charles Frost of the City probably was painted in this period, or may have been painted in the earlier New York period.

Frerichs also had engineering capabilities as evidenced by Patent No. 134,595 the U.S. government issued to him on January 1873 for "Improvement in Snow-Rams for Railroads". There had been rail connection between Stapleton and Tottenville since 1860 and Frerichs must have hoped that his invention would make it easier for him to ride the trains to the city on snowy days. It is not known if he was successful in marketing the patent. He did have a letter of recommendation from Dr. Deems to a Mr. Harrison, whom Dr. Deems thought might be interested in his snowplough, adding in his letter "Even if he fail of this he is a man worth knowing".

On September 18, 1874 Clara Frerichs died at the age of 50. The family had joined the South Baptist Church of Tottenville but due to disorganization in this church at this time, the funeral services were held at the Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church and were conducted by the Rev. Dr. Charles Deems assisted by Rev. Opdyke of the Bethel Church and the Rev. Daly. Burial was in the cemetery of this same church then

and now the only cemetery in this area. There is an interesting letter, dated December 28th of this same year from Dr. Deems to Frerichs thanking him for "your beautiful present from the lawyer". It is known that Frerichs did a portrait of Deems and it would be nice to think that the present was a portrait of him done as a gift of appreciation for his devotion to Mrs. Frerichs.

In 1880 Frerichs moved to Newark, New Jersey where his name can be found in the directories for the next twenty years. He is listed as an artist with the address 560 Broad Street for 15 years, in the last 5 years of which his home address was 42 and 43 Monmouth Street. In the next 5 years he is listed at three different addresses on Broad Street, namely 800, 760, 869 which are either separate or combined studio and home addresses. About 1880 he married a Miss E. Whalen a native of New York City. They had two boys, Eugene and Alexander, the latter became a newspaper editor.

A scrapbook of clippings from Newark newspapers of this period gives us the best insight into the character and work of our painter. He apparently was popular with the columnists who always referred to him as "Professor" and made many visits to his studio and described his latest paintings in glowing and detailed terms. As was the custom of the day many of these paintings were exhibited in local store windows. Charles G. Campbell & Sons' picture store window on Broad Street, corner of Clinton Street, seemed to be most favored. Indeed one reporter wrote "Professor Frerichs' retired habits and modest taste made him little known until his pictures were exhibited in Campbell's window".

The interviews printed in the papers are interesting in showing the personality of our artist and in portraying the art climate of the late 1800s. I should like to quote in part from one of them:

"Something of the life of Professor Frerichs, Teacher of the Art School. Told to the writer before the pleasant grate fire in his studio. The studio presents a pleasing confusion, littered with multitudinous objects of art, bric-a-brac, books, growing plants, great easy chairs and various implements of the artist trade. . . The Professor is a well built gentleman of courtly demeanor and affable manners and his more than half a century rests lightly upon him and has only turned his luxuriant hair

to an iron gray. . . he has entered upon his work in the Essex Art Association with deep interest and thorough appreciation of the future of art education in Newark."

The majority of the paintings referred to in the newspaper clippings are portraits and landscapes. The rest are marines and seascapes, animals, religious subjects and a few still lifes. Several paintings were copies of popular pictures of the day, notably "Christ at Gethsemane" by the German artist, J.M.H. Hofmann (now in St. Paul's Church, Tottenville and recently restored); "Springtime" and the "Storm" by the French artist Pierre Cot (Shadowbrook Restaurant, Redbank, New Jersey); "The Spirit of 1776" by Archibald M. Willard (Conference House, Tottenville).

Of the sixty paintings mentioned very few have been located. In general the paintings were sold to New York dealers for exhibition and sale in New York, Boston and the West. Some were sent to Holland. Some were done on commission, notably the portraits. Some were contributions to worthy causes. Undoubtedly there are paintings of Professor Frerichs moldering away in the dark of basements and attics of old houses. It is hoped that this article will return them to the light.

Frerichs painted mostly in oil on large canvases, although there are some charming smaller paintings, especially still lifes privately owned. Some of the portraits were done by the "new process of crayon and watercolor". His skies are beautiful, his reds warm. Always a competent artist he was often an inspired artist. The paintings reflect the dark background and deep colors typical of the Flemish School in which he was trained. Although not classed with the painters of the Hudson River School he could be identified with them in the romantic conceptions of his landscapes of the wilderness of the Appalachian range of western North Carolina — an area which he was probably one of the first to paint. As an artist he was compared to such contemporaries as Wier, the animal painter and John F. Kensett, the popular landscape painter in whom interest was recently revived through an exhibition in the Whitney Museum of Modern Art. Many of his autumn scenes are reminiscent of Cropsey's in the coloring and structure of the foliage. William H. Gerds, Jr. in his book "Painting and Sculpture in New Jersey" compares Frerichs to the 18th Century French seascape artist, Claude J. Vernet,

when he refers to Frerichs as a "portrait painter but the works by him which are known today are nearly all seascapes dark and powerful romantic paintings in the tradition of Vernet".

The nicest tribute came to Frerichs from Augustus Watters, local poet and novelist, who wrote in the Daily Advertiser of a painting now believed to be the one in Ringwood Manor, as follows:

Professor Frerichs is a fellow-countryman of the great Rembrandt, and is himself one of the most versatile and conscientious artists. The finest thing he has yet done is his painting entitled "Little Falls", a charming cataract, located about six miles beyond Patterson. He has happily selected the dreamy and poetic season of autumn and the exquisite blending of sky, water, rocks, clouds and forest produce an effect like that of a fine symphony or poem. . . You will be surprised when I say that Mr. Frerichs' autumn pictures are

truer to nature than the famous autumns of Kensett. The peculiar haze which the latter casts around the foliage is never seen while the leaves remain. It comes at a later time in what is known as Indian Summer. . . "Little Falls" both in subject and execution is a masterpiece and it would be a disgrace to Newark if it were permitted to leave the city.

In 1900, his health failing, Frerichs came back to live in Tottenville with his eldest son; William Desire, at 7703 Amboy Road. His studio was the top floor of the house. In 1901-1902 he again appears in the Newark directory not with a Broad Street but a Market Street address. It is possible he temporarily rented a studio for better disposal of his paintings. The following year he was listed in the "Standard Directory of Richmond Borough", the only time he was ever listed in an island directory. He continued to paint but no longer signed his paintings claiming they were no longer good. The walls of the house were covered

with his pictures, end to end, and many of them, to the embarrassment of local residents, were nudes. A large, colorful figure, he was often seen walking through town wearing a cape and long, flowing hair.

Mr. Frerichs died on March 16, 1905, in the 76th year of his life. From a local newspaper we read "The funeral services were held at the South Baptist Church on Main Street and conducted by the Reverend W.H. Gardener, Ph.D. of New Haven, Connecticut. The masonic lodge of which he was a member sent a delegation from Newark. They conducted the beautiful commitment service assisted by the local lodge. Two appropriate selections were sung by Miss Sullivan and two organ selections were played by Walter E. Sharrot. A floral pillow containing the word "Grand Pa". a wreath of autumn leaves and other floral gifts testified to the affection held for the deceased. Burial was in the cemetery of the Bethel Methodist Church on Amboy Road.

"Discourse, Delivered in the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, Port Richmond, Staten Island, by the Pastor, Rev. James Brownlee, on the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Settlement of the Church on Staten Island, June 22nd, 1898."

(Continued from Vol. XXXI, No. 3, p. 25)

A few years ago a very old book, containing records of baptisms and dating from 1696, was recovered by the Consistory. It is interesting as enabling us to trace, nearly through these two centuries, the connection

with our Church of many families bearing honored names. Time has, however, taken great liberties with many of these names, especially with those of French origin, in spelling or pronunciation, or both; changing, for

example, Du Puy into Depew; Du Sosois or Du Secoy into Dissosway; Mersereau into Mushrow; and, most absurd of all, Crocheron into Cochonne; and so with many others. The descendants of these families should cherish these old names, and every letter and tone of them. They are something to be proud of. If I were a Du Puy, or a Du Bois, or a Guion, or a Du Chesne, or a Grammont, all of which were once common on our Island, nothing would tempt me to vary, by a jot or tittle, from the honored names.

Some of these have disappeared from our Church lists of the present day, both of Huguenot and Dutch names. The Rezeaus, and Poillons, and Du Secoys, and Guions, and Adriances, and Du Chêsnès, and De Grameaux (De Grammont?), and the Van Tuyls, and Veltmanns, and Vanderbeecks, and Hooglands, and Valkenbergs, and Lautza, and Zutphens, and Terhunes, and Brinckerhoffs, and many others are no longer found in the records of the Church of their fathers. Some of them have died out from the Island altogether.

As this old record indicates, it was the universal practice in those



REFORMED CHURCH, PORT RICHMOND
FROM THIS PULPIT REV. BROWNLEE DELIVERED HIS "DISCOURSE"